A Humanistic Approach to Scaling Up

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Introduction

While set in a traditional hotel environment, there is nothing typical about this three-day workplace meeting. It is October 2018, the attendees in the room all work with the State of California Expanded Learning Division (EXLD); they include California Department of Education (CDE) employees, County Office of Education employees, and outside support agencies. Together, they make-up what is called the System of Support for Expanded Learning (SSEL), which manages and ensures program quality of over 4,500 after-school and summer programs at individual schools and serve 860,000 students annually across the State of California. These programs often serve the poorest, most disenfranchised students in the state.

The meeting kicks off with the over 75 attendees being asked to introduce themselves by region. As a designee stands up and introduces their team, the room explodes in cheers, claps, and shout-outs for the names of people mentioned. People jump out of their chairs to cheer on their colleagues. Over 30 minutes is invested in cheering and welcoming every single person in the room. Following the introductions, EXLD Director Michael Funk leads a late-night talk show style introduction, to the coach from the Society for Organizational Learning (SOL), Mette Miriam Rakel Boll, who has been working with the SSEL group for 18 months. "Now, heeeeeere's Mette!" at which the room explodes with cheers hoots, and hollers. Once everyone calms down, Mette leads the group in a guided meditation. Everyone is eagerly engaged, knowing now—after over a year of practice—how to sit up in their chairs, root their feet to the floor, and breathe slowly as they ground themselves in the present. A quiet serenity settles over the room. People feel seen through the individual and celebratory nature of the introductions and appreciate taking the time to physically and emotionally connect to the work of the next three days. After the guided meditation, the participants reflect on the power of the launch of this meeting, some with tears in their eyes and a catch in their voice:

> "I am part of this whole; we should bring our best selves forward to do this."
>
> "How amazing it is to be in this room with you guys; we all trust each other and can be honest. A year ago, it wasn't like that. The constant struggle is how do we maintain this sense of calm when we are out in the world? How do we remind ourselves that we can do this on our own?"

> "I am very appreciative of this 'social field,'[1] this container that we co-created. I've learned how to create this kind of container in other places. I've gone through a transformation; people can see it. We can do that for kids, create this space for kids; they can grow and make mistakes."

This scene represents a stark contrast from two years earlier, when the same people entered these spaces with trepidation and distrust. While some were friendly to each other, the community fell into cliques and people worked in silos. As one participant expressed about her experiences two years earlier:

> I was surprised by how fractured relationships were. Individuals had their own agendas…you had a lot of cliques, you had the vets looking down at the newbies.

In the past, many did not see themselves "as part of the whole." They just saw their tasks to complete in their isolated roles. Many did not feel a personal responsibility for ensuring that children had high-quality programs that could potentially save lives.

While, from the outside, this approach may appear superfluous and a waste of time, the experiences of the SSEL team have indicated that it has fostered improved relationships, a more coherent vision and sense of purpose, more effective decision-making, and more effective relationships with after-school program grantees.

1. This term and other systems thinking/organizational learning terms are shared in Appendix A as they were shared with CDE staff in the statewide meetings.

The Project

The Work

The System of Support (the Expanded Learning Division (EXLD) in the California Department of Education, County Office of Education staff, the California AfterSchool Network (CAN), ASAP Connect, and several other partners) come together in tri-annual, three-day, statewide System of Support Stakeholder (SSEL) Meetings. In 2017, these stakeholders committed to transforming their culture through deep-level coaching in systems thinking/organizational learning with The Society for Organizational Learning (SOL), led by Robert Hanig and Mette Miriam Boll with counsel from Peter Senge. The deep coaching included:

- In-person, two-day planning meetings three times a year with a team from the System of Support and Division Director;
- Monthly check-in calls for the first nine months of the project with the team; and
- Initial, full facilitation—with gradual release to the team—of the tri-annual, three-day SSEL statewide meetings.

From the outset of the coaching with SOL, Division Director Michael Funk, set cultural transformation as his goal as a means to support better programming for kids all over the State of California. He stated in May 2017:

> I hope by July 2018, we've got a System of Support that is culturally strong and mechanically sound and providing TA [technical assistance] that's making a difference in supporting kids.

The theory of change for this cultural transformation is that, to better support high-quality programming in the state's after-school programs, the System of Support (EXLD's members and external support providers) need to work well together, communicate clearly and effectively, and be able to solve problems well. The assumption is that culture changes behavior rather than policy and that a cultural shift is born out of reflection and skill-building at the individual and personal level. As an external partner explains, "Policy doesn't shift behavior, culture does. You need policy, but you need culture to sustain that policy." There is urgency behind this work, as many of the children served by these programs are the most underserved in California.

The Documentation

The Stuart Foundation hired the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) to document in two phases the influence of deep-level coaching in systems thinking and organizational learning on the process of organizational change in the EXLD.

Phase One

Examined the following research questions:

- How is the work taken up and how does it influence both the direct recipients of the sustained coaching as well as the second level of recipients (those with whom the direct recipients work)?
- How is the work co-constructed between the coaches and the practitioners?
- How does the work surface and address problems of practice related to the Stuart Foundation's goals and strategies?

To answer these questions, SCOPE documented:

- The learning/coaching opportunities provided by observing in-person planning sessions with coaches Robert Hanig and Mette Miriam Boll (June 15-16, 2017; September 7-8, 2017; May 7-8, 2018; and September 19-20, 2018)
- The influence of the learning/coaching opportunities on the CDE Expanded Learning Division by:
    a. Observing four SSEL statewide meetings of the division (October 2017, January 2018, June 2018, and September 2018);
    b. Participating in monthly phone check-ins with providers and core CDE team (June 30, 2017; August 9, 2017; September 1, 2017; September 26, 2017; and December 12, 18, 20, & 21, 2017); and
    c. Completing interviews with Director of CDE Expanded Learning Division and original members of the Sponsorship Group.[2]

2. While several requests were made to interview the coaches, we were unable to schedule an interview with them.

- The influence of the learning/coaching opportunities on the second-level participants. Second-level participants are those not participating in the planning meetings and coaching sessions. These participants, however, are interacting with the coaches in the tri-annual System of Support Stakeholder Meetings. We have documented the influence on second-level participants by:

    a. Observing SSEL statewide meetings of the division (October 2017, January 2018, and June 2018);

    b. Conducting interviews with non-core team members; and

    c. Participating in second-level participants' check-in calls (four times).

SCOPE analyzed the data and provided Division Director Michael Funk with reflections on the work during the duration of the report. In addition, SCOPE wrote an interim memo in the summer of 2018, which it vetted with Michael Funk prior to release. It was delivered to him in shorter and longer formats for him to share with the SSEL.

This case provides a thematic analysis of the ways that the transformation unfolded between April 2017 and November 2018 as well as early indicators of changes in individual behavior and attitudes, organizational culture, and divisional practices.

Phase Two

Following the first phase, we found ourselves curious about whether and how the cultural shifts at the state level play out at the regional level and in programming for youth. Phase Two provided us with some opportunity to investigate the influence of systems thinking/organizational learning from the grassroots perspectives (i.e. the site-level perspective). The latter perspective is crucial to better assess to what extent changing the conditions at the state level results in improved opportunities for youth. SCOPE also researched how the cultural shift at the state level mirrors the ecology of California's accountability systems with regards to a move from compliance to continuous improvement. Although the documentation for this project is in the context of the field of expanded learning, there are larger lessons to be learned about creating the conditions for a cultural shift in a state-level organization and its implications for changes in practice at the site level with the resulting opportunities for youth.

SCOPE investigated the following research questions:

- How have the mindset shifts in the EXLD division and among partners influenced regions and sites to change their practices?
- How do regional and site-level people experience the changed state-level conditions, and how has that influenced the kinds and quality of programs that they are able to deliver to children?
- How do the changes in the EXLD division overlap with other California moves from compliance to continuous improvement?

To answer these questions, SCOPE focused on a single region, recommended by Michael Funk, as one that had taken up the state-level work deeply. This region, Region Five, has had stable leadership for nearly a decade and one of the two county leads was a member of the initial planning (the Sponsorship Group) at the CDE. Region Five supports 242 Expanded Learning sites across Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey counties. Many of the sites also subcontract with other organizations to provide services, so the county leads work with these subcontractors and other community partners. In addition, the county leads work with other organizations to bring more resources into the communities that they serve. SCOPE conducted interviews with the two county leads and Expanded Learning directors in two school districts that work closely with the county leads.

Reframing Scaling Up

One leader—no matter how competent, charismatic, and compelling her vision—does not a sustaining organizational change make. Organizational change "going to scale" sustainably requires changing the hearts and minds of the people within an organization, the culture of the organization, and finally how the organization better meets its mission. This case study explores how this process has begun playing out in one large, historically bureaucratic state organization. This transformation has been spearheaded by the EXLD Director Michael Funk, now in his sixth year as Division Director. Coming from a community-based organization background himself, Michael understood the value of relationships over bureaucracy, of inquiry versus prescription, and of support rather than punitive sanctions. He articulated his vision for scaling up the use of systems thinking/organizational learning approaches to transform his division:

> This work is only successful if it goes out to broader and broader circles to create better conditions for young people. The System of Support is supportive and getting along and is a positive place where people are growing and caring for each other. We exist to support kids and programs. You can't authentically do that if there is infighting. Once you get past that, you can start to build a healthy experience in the container, you can make it bigger and make micro-containers.

More specifically, many in the Expanded Learning Division work in regional teams of members with different roles to support a particular region. The assumption is that, when those teams function with a high level of collaboration and communication, the grantees (Expanded Learning providers) receive high-quality support and clear expectations and are able to deliver higher-quality services to children.

A Challenging History

Prior to this project, the work of the division tended to be fractured, inconsistent, and inequitable. For example, one staff member described a lack of vision and coherence in how EXLD staff saw their roles and the mission of the division. He shared what the staff needed from Director Michael Funk:

> We really needed someone to take the reins and have a vision for our program. He gave us clarity of what we were going to do. Historically, we as a department were not good at defining long-term goals and projects.…A lot of confusion about what we were doing that lead to a lot of issues about who was responsible for what.

Another staff person who had worked at the regional level described the services and support received from the EXLD as "fractured, no rhyme or reason to any of it…you had programs no one had set foot into" and it "…impacted the quality of programs, the relationships with each, and the professional development [the sites] were able to give." The only time this regional staff member saw her EXLD staff member, they were there to "…ding us. I was shocked, I thought they were there to support us."

In this report, we describe how the transformation unfolded by:

1. Transforming hearts and minds through inclusive practices and a focus on self-knowledge through personal mastery;

2. Changing the culture through developing the leadership, communication, and relational capacities of the staff; and

3. Changing divisional practices through the use of systems thinking/organizational learning tools and strategies as well as expanding the work beyond the System of Support to others in the division, partners, and regions.

Transforming Hearts and Minds

The first step in the scaling up process was to help the staff understand their own roles in the system and how their beliefs and actions influence the system as a whole. To begin the process of addressing the stakeholders' hearts and minds, a representative group needed to lead the transformation process so that multiple perspectives could inform planning. Even after the group was more representative, they still had to grapple with issues around inclusivity, as some were more embracing of the change process than others. Efforts were made to do this by recognizing and supporting the personal growth and development of each individual in the System of Support.

Towards representation: The expansion of the initial "Aptos Group" to be more inclusive

In the spring of 2017, Division Director Michael Funk selected a team to attend the Aptos Leadership Institute—a four-day institute on personal mastery and systems thinking/organizational learning, funded by the Stuart Foundation; led by Peter Senge, Mette Miriam Boll, and Robert Hanig; and designed for educators and support providers from schools, districts, County Office of Education, state departments and community-based organizations. Michael described his rationale for his selection process:

> I didn't come into state government five years ago to lead a division. I came to lead the state to a different place of quality and experiences that kids have in these programs. And I wanted a group that shared that vision, that could see that their job was far beyond just working at the department.

This group included both CDE Division staff as well as external partners from the California AfterSchool Network and ASAP Connect. They formed tight bonds during the Aptos Institute and referred to themselves as the "Aptos Group" afterwards. An external partner commented that the diversity of the group was key to the success of this project. "It was multi-layered, not just CDE staff, which empowered other layers of the system to bring the work forward."

Despite its diversity, this group expressed considerable concern about how to share their learning and increased awareness of systems thinking/organizational learning with the larger group. One of the issues was that sharing of the learning could be facilitated by having a more representative group. Guided by their coaches, the Aptos Group decided after the June 2017 stakeholder meeting that their core group should expand from 11 to 18 members. The expanded group would include four additional CDE staff from CDE positions not represented in the initial group, including Fiscal Analysts and Managers and it would include three regional county office leads external to the CDE. The decision to be more representative had the potential to have a direct impact on children, as it ensured that every role in the System of Support Regional Team was represented in the planning group in order to ensure that the teams functioned more effectively to provide better support to the sites. These teams were made up of county leads (from the county offices of education), regional consultants and regional analysts from the CDE. (For a full timeline of events, see Appendix B.)

As the group decided to expand in June, they received coaching on and spent considerable energy in processing and discussing how they would introduce the idea of expanding the group and how they would talk about the newly formed expanded group. In summer of 2017, they decided—through coaching—that they would call themselves the "Sponsorship Group" to demonstrate that they were sponsors of the work, but not an "in" group.

Four months later, in September 2017, the newly formed Sponsorship Group was brought together with Robert and Mette. Much energy and time was spent on welcoming the new members and discussing why they were included. The new members

expressed gratitude for their inclusion. Issues surfaced, however, around past tensions and hurts and energy was spent processing those past challenges. As a whole, the entire group demonstrated a strong need to talk about past conflicts, tensions, and toxicity. They spent considerable time on building a new social field and learning about the "Ladder of Connectedness."[3] Michael said to them at the beginning of the gathering:

> I am struck by the people who are in the circle for the first time. It is so much richer with you in it.…Many of you were bright spots.… Some of you whispering ideas gave me the courage to make radical change.

By the May 2018 planning meeting, all members demonstrated extremely high levels of trust, collegiality, and vulnerability with the group. There was a remarkably easy flow of conversation with all members speaking up relatively equally and appearing to be equally supported. Some challenges had surfaced recently, and there were tears and concerns with members demonstrating high levels of compassion and support for each other. It was also a space where each member's strengths were visibly apparent, where each participant could be their full self. For example, one member is very maternal in her approach and another struggles to trust others, and each could express their authentic self in the confines of this safe space. The ability of this group to become so cohesive has the potential directly influencing the quality of programs available to children because they were able to work through some past challenges and distrust in how regional teams functioned in order to make plans during the stakeholder meetings for the regional teams to practice working together using systems thinking/organizational learning tools. For example, they planned to introduce a case study protocol to the SSEL at the upcoming June meeting for regional teams to share a challenging situation with each other and work through ways to approach it using systems thinking/organizational learning strategies.

Moving from in-group/out-group notions to more inclusivity

A major tension among all the stakeholders has been a sense of an in-group/out-group dynamic. The in-group/out-group dynamic was proving an obstacle to strong communication and problem-solving because it was creating a division between staff and preventing them from providing strong support to the after-school sites. Those who attended the Aptos Institute and those who were later part of the Sponsorship Group were clearly marked as the "in-group."

3. This term and others are defined in Appendix A.

In June 2017, the coaches identified "false kindness" as pervasive in the SSEL culture. False kindness exists when people keep their relations superficial and provide neither real feedback nor engage in constructive discussions about improvement. There was a culture of defensiveness and being closed that prevented a culture of inquiry and learning. The coaches encouraged the group to develop the muscles of deep listening. Robert encouraged the group to "actually listen to what they are saying, have compassion for their perspective. When someone expresses a lack of power, you have to unpack it."

It was from this tension around in-group/out-group that the coaches encouraged the group to think about who was missing and expand the group to the Sponsorship Group. Once that was decided, the Aptos Group engaged in considerable coaching on how they "come into a room" to present what they have been doing, how they share the work. The group expressed concern about how to help the new members feel valued and welcomed. Michael said, in June 2017, "we need to think about how we present it so it isn't us and them." The Aptos Group made a commitment to develop the capacity of the new people, and a good portion of each coaching session with Robert and Mette included introduction and practice of personal mastery and systems thinking tools and strategies that the larger Sponsorship Group had not yet been exposed to since they had not attended the Aptos training. Over the year that followed, the coaches worked closely with the Aptos and then Sponsorship Group to build awareness of the ways in which those groups' mental models and actions were actively perpetuating the in-group/out-group dynamic.

While considerable progress has been made in this area, the challenge still persists. One staff member suggested that those who are opposed to the changes still feel that trust is not given, but has to be earned by the EXLD leadership. The lack of inclusivity can threaten the message for which they are advocating—that staff should work with students in a way that promotes inclusivity, open inquiry and trust. As one staff explained, "We need to deal with kids with open hearts and open minds, and we are not doing that for colleagues that we sit with every day."

Even with these continued challenges, the influence of breaking down silos has been profound on staff. For example, one staff member who works as an analyst reflected on how his role had changed:

> Just being able to have a voice in the decision-making process has been a huge thing for us. I know as an analyst we have our duties and are not really pushed to provide insight into program issues. I think what has been happening has really broadened our own confidence and our strengths, so we can think of ourselves as professional versus just an analyst.

Acknowledging the personal: Creation of a caring culture

One of the hallmarks of Michael's leadership style, reinforced by Robert and Mette's approach to coaching, is welcoming and starting with the personal. A primary assumption regarding starting with the personal is that, to support quality programming for kids, one has to bring oneself fully into the work and not treat it just as a bureaucratic job; it requires heart. Starting with what drives each person personally helps them access their own heart, connect with each other, and connect to the vision of the work, which is to provide quality programs for the highest need children in California. In addition, perhaps counter-intuitively, sometimes starting with the personal is an easier access point for learning new tools and strategies.

Every meeting, both planning/coaching sessions and stakeholder meetings, begins with a check-in and journaling. Robert and Mette, through their coaching, and Michael, in his leadership style, create a welcoming space for the personal. People often share deeply personal and emotionally challenging situations and are consistently met with heartfelt warmth and compassion. This is a key component of what Robert and Mette describe as creating a social field and a safe container for people to grow and take an inquiry stance with each other. For example, in June 2017, Michael shared a story of a colleague who had experienced the murder of a close friend. Prior to the meeting, he asked her if she wanted to share with the larger group and experience support from the group. He shared that what he learned from that experience was that "allowing myself to be fully vulnerable builds strength, exposing your vulnerability allows others to be vulnerable and builds community." Robert reinforced this story as an example of building a container.

At every planning/coaching meeting, members of the group would express gratitude for each other, for their kindness, support, and for being like a family. For example, one Aptos Group member said to another at the September planning meeting, "I love [him] like a brother." And then he turned to the new members of the Sponsorship Group and said, "You will remember the next two days because of the people and the work we do. I love everyone. I know I can count on you personally and professionally."

In the statewide stakeholder meetings, many participants responded positively to the opportunity to begin with the personal. For example, one person shared as a debrief from a check-in with colleagues:

> I love this process. I appreciate the ladies that are in my group. My mom told me, when a student is ready to learn, the teacher will appear.…We came today bringing our personal lives with us. I realized I had been compartmentalized. My mom has been diagnosed with cancer, having this process to bring that stuff up, and then I can move up. Thank you for helping me change my language from worry and anxiety to uncertainty.

The culture of caring was reinforced by Robert and Mette who spent considerable time in the statewide stakeholder meetings giving participants opportunities to practice "personal mastery" through a range of check-in and connecting activities.

Placing an emphasis on building relationships among staff helps the staff work in their teams more effectively. As one EXLD staff member reflects:

> Getting us involved with the SOL way of thinking has really changed how we operate with each other. In the past, we were very separated by classification. Analysts did their work, regional [county] leads had their stuff, and we had a difficult time working together as a team.

A County Office of Education staff member adds:

> You don't often have a significant amount of time dedicated to get to know people at a much deeper, soulful level. You go to a meeting and it's the meeting. I know that when we walk in that room (SSEL meetings), it is like a family reunion; we walk in with just incredible love for each other. I really mean that genuinely. It has allowed me to expand my connections with others at a deep level. I know that I could pick up the phone and call any one of them and have a very heartfelt conversation and feel that they have my back and I have theirs.

Changing the Culture

Division Director Michael Funk believed that a cultural transformation of the System of Support was essential to supporting higher-quality programming for children. In the past, he explained, people did not always see the link between how they do their work with the quality of experiences children had in their programs; they took a more bureaucratic stance, following the letter of the regulations but losing the spirit behind the regulations in doing so. Supporting quality programs requires a high level of collaboration and transparency among the EXLD and external partner staff. The previous culture inhibited that.

When meeting with Robert and Mette in June 2017 to plan the nature of the coaching, Michael requested that the coaches initially lead more of the work, particularly at the tri-annual SSEL meetings, and then gradually increase the core group's capacity to lead the work themselves. This is exactly what has happened. All along, however, the role of the coaches and the agenda for planning meetings and stakeholder meetings was co-constructed, if not led by, the Aptos Group and then the Sponsorship Group. Michael knew that the more an expanded group could take ownership of and lead the work, the more it could transform the culture.

Developing capacity: Supporting the Sponsorship Group to lead the cultural transformation

One of the prime ways that the Aptos and then the Sponsorship Group developed their capacity was in the planning meetings, which actually functioned primarily as an opportunity to process current conditions within the division, to set a shared vision for where they wanted to go, and to learn about and practice personal mastery as well as the tools and mindsets of systems thinking/organizational learning. Typically, about two thirds of each meeting was spent on the Sponsorship Group's own growth and development and one third specifically planning the stakeholder meetings.

The Aptos Group took a leadership role in the September 2017 planning meeting when they planned exactly how they wanted to bring in the new members of the Sponsorship Group. The first day of that meeting was spent sharing their journey, what they had learned with the new members and processing the past and current reality, giving the new members a chance to engage and learn about the mind-sets and tools of personal mastery and systems thinking/organizational learning, including "check-ins," "ladder of connectedness," and mental models.

In the October 2017 stakeholder meeting, some of the Sponsorship Group played small roles in energizing the participants. This role expanded considerably by the January 2018 stakeholder meeting. This enhanced role was due, in part, to unforeseen circumstances: Robert was extremely ill and unable to attend. In January, the ASAP Connect Team drew on the Clifton Strengths assessment tool to the group to help participants understand their personal working strengths. In addition, several other members of the Aptos Group shared personal stories to exemplify system thinking/organizational learning tools, such as "shifting the burden" or "the iceberg." Robert's absence accelerated the Sponsorship Group's leadership role in a way that they were able to manage and show evidence of being able to continue moving forward.

By the October 2018 meeting, many more staff played roles in the planning and facilitation of the meeting as the SOL coaches stepped back into an observer role. One technique implemented in October was "lightening talks," short 10 minute stories that various staff member shared of how they were thinking differently about their work. These lightening talks may have lessened an us/them dynamic.

Throughout the duration of this project, outside partner ASAP Connect has been responsible for planning the stakeholder meetings. They greatly valued the move to inclusion of more staff members because they had seen the capacity of the staff but did not feel that they were tapping into that capacity previously. A partner reflected, "People are amazing on the team." The ASAP team reflected that, as they released the responsibilities they formerly held in planning the meeting, it was good for the unit as a whole, helping to establish a sense—and a reality—of shared ownership.

Moving the mountain: Evidence of cultural shifts

By the fall of 2018, just 18 months after its launch, there was evidence of substantial cultural shifts in the division. In addition to building the capacity of the Sponsorship Group to lead the work, the cultural shift has been a result of Michael's leadership approach, coaching, and the use of particular tools and methods. Michael has engaged with his staff and the larger stakeholder group by modeling vulnerability and transparency, and this has had a substantial influence on building trust and transforming the culture.

The coaches also created opportunities for participants to expose past challenges and choose to participate in the cultural transformation. For example, a participant was working with Michael on an activity around the "ladder of inference." At the share-out, he talked about how he had a chance to share with Michael his initial perceptions—that Michael was a bureaucrat. He went on to say that getting to know him as a human being has changed this perspective of him. This participant acknowledged that he had publicly challenged Michael frequently. By creating a space for sharing these personal and tense dynamics, the coaches helped accelerate the cultural shift.

Sponsorship Group members, in particular, have shared their experiences with a cultural shift. As early as June 2017, a member shared in a debrief of the June stakeholder meeting:

> We were surprised the group is shifting, quickly becoming more cohesive, joy in the room, the tone of the meeting was better than I have ever seen. We are primed and ready.

As demonstrated in the previous section, participants have been open enough to the SOL work to participate in optional check-in calls and to try methods and tools in their own work. A portion of the January 2018 stakeholder meeting was also devoted to vision-setting as participants were all actively engaged in reflection activity guided by the following questions:

- Aspirations—What are we trying to grow?
- Current Reality—What is already in existence?
- Gap—What is missing?
- Structure—What are the structural elements that produced this (procedures, policies)?
- Recommendations—What strategies do we need to shift?

These types of activities help all stakeholders actively engage in the group's transformation. Just the idea of thinking about what they are trying to grow, rather than focusing on compliance with regulations, is a very different stance from the prior year. It also demonstrates that the use of the tools of organizational learning are being used outside of the initial groups and have become part of the organization's structural routines.

ASAP Connect believes strongly in helping each staff member identify and share their strengths and work in an environment where their strengths are valued. The team brought strength assessments and strength training to the EXLD team throughout the year and a half of this project. This was important not only for them to be more effective and feel valued but also because:

> We want adults to do this for students. How can they learn if we are not able to model that for them. We haven't been modeling it as a system. Now that we are a more cohesive system, we are more creative and can break down potential barriers.

Furthermore, they believe that they learned from the SOL team how to increase their emotional intelligence and their communication skills, the same skills that they want to develop with the young people in their programs. Another ASAP Connect staff member shared:

> It has to start with us as adults; a lot of us as adults have never really experienced that in a work environment. It has been very competitive and cut-throat and individualistic and this is much more of a collaborative community.

As another participant observed, "It was nothing short of transformational what we've seen happen in the last year and a half." In addition, the powerful transformation that has happened at the state level has opened up the possibility for the staff that they can create similar cultural shifts in their own regions. "People can see the power in their own ecosystems, in their own regions," according to one external partner.

Changing the Way of Working

By addressing the hearts and minds of the individuals within the System of Support and then supporting their increased awareness and skills through a cultural transformation, the way the EXLD and its partners began to work changed over the short span of this project. The work changed both internally, as they began to change their ways of working, as well as externally in how the EXLD interacted with other partners and the growth of the work at the regional level.

Application to practice: Applying the tools and mindsets to the work

Both the Sponsorship Group and the larger stakeholder group have demonstrated a remarkably quick acceptance of, and even application of, the personal mastery and systems thinking/organizational learning mindsets and practices.

In part because the greatest self-identified need has been around transforming a challenging culture where people work in silos and fiefdoms, a large focus of the coaching and work in the stakeholder meetings has been on personal mastery and work within the social field. Not surprisingly, this is the aspect of the work that was taken up most quickly. In particular, many have implemented guided meditation, journaling, and check-ins in their own work with regional teams, partners, and grantees.

Michael began by modeling this in his fall 2016 kick-off to the SSEL Meeting with meditation and journaling. He reported that 85% of participants responded favorably. He continues to model this practice. In the winter of 2017, he was asked by a region to begin a regional conference with reflection and meditation rather than a typical keynote address.

One of the most significant new practices was the creation of optional bi-monthly check-in calls. Following the October 2017 stakeholder meeting, a member of the Expanded Learning Division who is not on the Sponsorship Group started the calls for all stakeholders by asking them to share how they are thinking about and using the tools and methods in their own work. These conference calls have varied in participation from two participants to fifteen. At the end of the 2018 school year, the management of these calls was passed on by its creator to three new people, none of whom are in the Sponsorship Group. The calls are held on varied days and times of the week to facilitate maximum participation. In the initial communication to the stakeholder group about the check-in calls, they were described as:

> A way to check in with each other about our work progress, or lack thereof, depending on our lives, on using that content and practices we gained during our time together.

On a May 2018 call, participants reflected on the value of the calls. Some reflections from non-Sponsorship Group members included:

> "I am grateful for the calls you put together. It challenges me to choose one and use one."
>
> "The calls serve as a reminder to be intentional about the work. If I had a call, there were times I didn't have a time to practice a method. Even if I hadn't had that opportunity, the calls made me think. The SOL work

> gives me a common language to put behind it. I understand what you are saying, because we are all speaking the same language."
>
> "We are all becoming more metacognitive about this information and increasingly deliberate about implementation. I ask myself which tools would be best at this time."

Another point of evidence of implementation can be seen through the use of common language. While participants are all starting to use common language—like "inquiry stance," "what are we trying to grow," and "mental models"—they are also seeing the value in modifying the systems thinking language to match with language already used by the stakeholders, such as using their language of "climate, culture, and safe and supportive environment" to describe the ideas of a social field.

By January 2018, Sponsorship and non-Sponsorship Group members were reporting using systems thinking strategies and tools. In the January stakeholder program, there were 11 pages describing tools and methods with an overview, possible uses, and links to ways that members are using each one. They include, among others, check-ins, core competencies of organizational learning, personal mastery, creative tension, ladder of inference, iceberg, and shifting the burden. There are also three additional pages with quotes from participants on how they are taking up the tools and methods. For example, two attendees reported:

> "I have been practicing the 'Moving from Difference to Dialogue.' Instead of immediately jumping to judgment or 'freezing,' I have been trying to be more intentional by using inquiry. I may not have all the context for the situation and this model helps remind me to inquire first, to give someone a chance for dialogue versus putting defenses up due to immediate assumptions. This is somewhat married with the ladder of inference. It has helped fill in the gaps in conversation and has led to less frustration."
>
> "I've have been trying to utilize the ladder of inference concept more regularly. At work, those of us that went through the SSEL meeting now have some common language to acknowledge when we're making assumptions, which I think shifts those conversations to be more productive."

This practice continued in all subsequent meeting programs.

In addition, in a May 2018 check-in call, several non-Sponsorship Group members discussed how they were using the methods and tools. For example, this dialogue ensued around use of Kantor's four-player model, a tool designed to help people understand group dynamics:

> Person 1: "We have done a Kantor light. We presented it in a department meeting with department directors. It was [a] briefer [for] 20 minutes. It has resonated with everyone. It has opened up the floor for a different conversation. I would love to see how that can go deeper. I think you can adapt it to a shorter version."
>
> Person 2: "The key for us was getting our folks to do something based on inquiry. If they really want to engage in CQI [Continuous Quality Improvement], it has to be from an inquiry stance. Moving from advocacy to inquiry. Understand that people may be stuck in a role. Ask them, 'Which of the four roles would you like to practice more often?'"

In the discussion on the May 2018 call, there was some confusion about how the work was supposed to be implemented. Some felt pressure to implement the tools with their grantees. Michael explained that the goal was for those providing the System of Support to be more effective. "We are doing this to grow deep in our System of Support." There was also an acknowledgement, reinforced by Robert, that this work takes time and that sometimes people feel emotional tension over not implementing the work immediately.

Finally, ASAP Connect proposed to create an online platform where staff can share tools, strategies, and artifacts of their use of the methods and tools.

Prioritizing highest need sites

The October 2018 statewide meeting provided a moment when Michael and the planning team were very clear about their theory of change. Michael stated that they need to provide support to struggling sites, "This is a 10 million dollar system, we ought to be able to figure out if it's working. What is the purpose of all of you being in this room? Children experiencing high-quality programs!"

This compelling statement led to a discussion about how the EXLD provides support to sites. The EXLD provides support to sites by identifying which sites are in greatest need for technical assistance. Those in the greatest need receive what is called Critical TA. In the past, there have been questions about who should receive Critical TA and how much of staff's time should be spent providing that technical assistance as well as what kinds of supports other sites should get and who are in the tiers of success, called Targeted TA and Universal TA. Furthermore, in the past, there had been a checklist that was perceived as a prescription of steps to follow to which sites had to demonstrate compliance. Being singled out as most in need does not exactly inspire trust in or openness to those who come bearing checklist in hand. As the EXLD realized the importance of relationships in their state- and regional-level work, that emphasis was shifted to how the EXLD staff worked to support

the regional staff. In the October meeting, Michael emphasized, "The one measure of success indicating that your Critical TA is on track is if you are able to be fully intentional in developing a relationship with the program." He emphasized that the checklist had mental models embedded in it, and, as a group, they would discuss each step to surface those mental models so that they could have a "clear and calibrated understanding of our own quality improvement." Here is an instance of the division using the tools of organizational learning to fundamentally change the nature of the work they conduct.

This recent explanation of the theory of change represents an important first step in making explicit why strong relationships are essential to providing better support to regions and grantees. However, this is an area for continued effort to be transparent about the rationale for the development of the staff's personal mastery and system thinking skills with the purpose, as Michael Funk put it, of children experiencing high-quality programming.

Changing policies and structures

The coaching helped the staff understand that the systems thinking tools were not panaceas for fixing problems, but they could be used to shed light on previous ways of working that may not produce the desired outcomes due to underlying mental models. Learning about the iceberg helped Michael and his staff understand that it was important to understand the underlying assumptions or mental models behind policies. The policies are like artifacts that can make inherent assumptions or mental models transparent. Michael realized that there is a danger of people "trying to get to systems change by tinkering with the artifacts. But you have to examine the mental models behind the artifacts." For example, previously the EXLD had moved from a grant to a contract with the counties' Offices of Education. A contract verses a grant emphasized a mental model of a transactional and punitive relationship. In 2017 Michael changed the EXLD policies to be consistent with a mental model of support and, thus, did not continue to use contracts.

Expanding the container: Spreading the way of work

Relatively quickly, the work began to move beyond the System of Support regional teams. At a May 2018 statewide BOOST (Best of Out of School Time) conference, members of the Sponsorship Group had opportunities to share their work. One Sponsorship Group member asked, "How many other standing-room-only conferences are there in the Department of Education?" Another Sponsorship Group member reported that people approached him because they wanted to work in his office:

> Pre [transformation] was a freaking disaster. Post, who wouldn't want to work for a love-based organization? We are a light in our department. Everyone said, 'I want to come work for you, because I heard what you are doing here.' I felt so proud. That is the nail in the coffin that we are doing the right thing.

Another example of how the work is beginning to move into bigger containers happened in the summer of 2018 as the division embarked on Strategic Planning 2.0. The division felt pressure to complete the plan prior to the November state election to ensure that their division was headed the direction they wanted. System of Support team members participated as well as other participants. The culture of trust created with the support from the project carried into this planning session. In the October 2018 meeting, each group reported on their work. The groups included policy, collaborative partnerships, workforce, and grant administration. Some comments in the share-out are listed below:

> "It was one of the best experiences I've had in my 10 years in EXLD. We built on what we've done as a field already."

> "I saw eight of you in this room in the group and that made me feel 'you got my back.' There is so much to be said for creating the container before we got started."

> "We did such a wonderful job spreading the container to the other folks who were in the room for the first time. We felt it was important to start with an activity to give our group a chance to get to know each other at a different level."

> "You all did a great job expanding the container to include new people. I want to give you all my sincere gratitude for your work that day."

Impact at the Regional Level

To investigate the impact at the regional level, we interviewed CDE and county Office of Education staff across regions in Phase One of data collection. In Phase Two, we focused on one region that had demonstrated some early adoption of the culture shifts and practices cultivated at the state level. In this section, we discuss the impact from both Phases One and Two of data collection.

At the regional level, the regional teams serve as the conduit from the state level to programs and sites. County leads attend the tri-annual SSEL meetings and work as a team with CDE staff. County leads are county Office of Education employees who, in Region Five, support 242 Expanded Learning sites across four counties (Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey). These regional teams provide technical assistance to programs and sites through mentoring, training, brokering of resources, and facilitation of meetings. One of the county leads characterized their role as having two main foci:

1. Compliance with grant requirements so they can "continue to bring resources to our region and more support to our families and community."

2. Ensuring quality programs through "creating strong relationships with the grantees (programs) and other partners to bring in additional resources that will increase the quality of programming." In other words, networking with community partners to leverage resources is one of their primary responsibilities.

The county leads run a number of technical assistance groups including, STEAM Community of Practice (COPS) for site leadership, Developing After School Leadership (DASL) for frontline staff, and Rev UP, which is an annual regional conference with workshops and trainings for frontline staff, site directors, and program leaders. In addition, the county leads provide customized support for those sites that are struggling with program quality and attendance.

Not surprisingly, the transformation process in Region Five and other regions mirrors the transformation of the process at the state level, which was described earlier in this report. Change starts with a personal connection and engagement with the contemplative- and personal-mastery-oriented practices, such as meditation, journaling, and check-ins. Then it seems to move toward using some of the systems thinking/organizational learning tools to bring about cultural shifts, such as vision-centered practices, risk-taking, and improved relationships. Finally, structures and policies begin to shift and we begin to see evidence of changed student experiences and outcomes.

Starting with Personal Mastery

Initially, during the early stages of state-level transformation, some staff working on regional teams across the state reported that all the structural and policy changes resulted in a sense of overwhelm at the site level without deep understanding of the rationale behind the changes. If you change the structures without the culture, the structures will either get co-opted to fit the old culture or not be sustained. As one regional staff member shared, "We need to slow our pace a bit. [The sites] don't understand why we are doing things." Within the context of the old culture, new policies, even if they are designed to be supportive, can be perceived as a list of bureaucratic tasks. The regional team, with the encouragement of EXLD leadership, have focused first on developing relationships and trust before focusing on structural requirements. In other words, the same kind of transformation of hearts and minds and then cultural transformation needed to play out at the regional level before a focus on changed practices could take place. To do this, some regional teams have found check-ins and guided meditation as particularly useful tools to develop those relationships. Across regions, many used check-ins as a powerful tool to strengthen relationships within their regions. For example, one county office lead took 50 minutes of a regional meeting to lead a check-in and ask participants to tell stories about themselves. Another staff member in attendance recalled, "That was really amazing; people I've known for years I learned so much more about them. It created an energy in the room that was very connected."

In Region Five, the regional teams brought the personal mastery practices of meditation, check-in, and journaling to every meeting, including to the STEAM COPS, DASL, and Rev UP meetings that they held with grantees (programs) and line staff and in county-level collaboratives. Another favorite and early adopted tool was the "how you show up (prisoner, vacationer, sophisticate, explorer)" protocol. The county leads describe these tools as "part of our practice." They report that they notice a substantive difference in "everybody being focused on that time and place, focused on the conversation at hand. It makes the meetings much more efficient."

As it did at the state level, practices have impacted regional participants both personally and professionally. It has shifted the culture of how people work together and even influenced student programming. One leader reported that it not only changed her own mindset, but also changed how she engaged with her colleagues:

> I have never before done meditation….And I can honestly say it has changed my life. I have learned now, because we've been practicing it, to take deep breaths and to really take a timeout for myself sometimes when I need it to be able to take a step back and really reflect. And that is such a valuable skill to have….Because maybe something is going on and you can sense the energy escalating, for whatever reason

> we're frustrated, it could be any number of things. And just saying, "okay, let's just take a deep breath for a moment, let's just take a step back," or recognizing that maybe we need to circle back to the situation maybe tomorrow when we're not quite so close to it….I've always considered myself a very positive person, but I think just that increased extra awareness of how I show up matters. If I need to take that step outside the door and re-enter it with a different mindset, I'm going to do that now. Whereas before, maybe I just would ignore it.

The regional teams recognize that working on inward focused awareness has the potential for system-level impact as self-knowledge can lead to greater understanding of how one fits into the larger system and how the quality of one's presence in that system can ripple through it. As one member put it:

> We needed to start with ourselves….How are we looking at the world and looking at our place within this system; we needed to do a lot of that internal reflection in order to see the larger picture of the System of Support and what the potential was there for us as a whole team. I think that was a really critical juncture for us, within our statewide system…we've got to take an inward look to be able to be a better person and a better professional, but also a better team member in this larger system.

By bringing personal mastery practices to more interactions with grantees and partners, the county leads have seeded a culture of reflection and introspection. As one program director shared:

> Mindfulness has been really impactful in my own wellness…I practice like two to three times a week, I make some time to do some meditation and some breathing exercises as well because of that work that's been done over at Region Five meetings with [the county lead].

The comprehensive way the personal mastery tools have been shared with program leaders at regional meetings has given program directors the confidence and capacity to bring them to their own staff at the sites. As one program director shared:

> I've stolen those ideas. I have my site director's meetings and I do it with my group. So that has impacted our work in a positive way because it sets a tone. "Let's clear our minds"…there's a lot of reflection too where we might write in a journal. And then always at the end too, there's time to share with each other. It's not just being social for being social. We engage, connect, relate, have sympathy for…can commiserate with each other and really build a climate of a team.

In some cases, program leaders are bringing mindfulness practices back to their staff and to their students and, in other cases, their training reinforces district- or program-level interest in mindfulness programs. Either way, the work that the regional and program leads have done on their own practice infuses a level of authenticity and deeper understanding to improve the quality of programs that staff are able to offer students. As one county lead shared, "I've seen a lot of support when it comes to social emotional learning…to provide that safe place, safe learning, and nurturing environment for students and staff."

Seeding a Cultural Shift

By starting with personal mastery skills that they learned through SSEL meetings, the regional teams have fertilized the soil at the program level for transformed regional and local cultures as well as an openness to a changed culture at the state level from a focus on compliance to a focus on continuous quality improvement.

Michael Funk reports that some regions are even beginning to move past the relative safety of using check-ins to more complex tools such as shifting the burden. He noted that on the monthly check-in calls that the division runs with county office leads the group has requested that they begin to use Otto Schamer's case clinic methodology to better understand multiple perspectives on common challenges. He notes that the request to use this tool came "organically" from the group. This methodology was only recently introduced in the statewide meetings.

ASAP Connect staff reinforce that EXLD staff are starting to share the tools learned from the SOL coaches with grantees, like shifting the burden or the iceberg. One ASAP Connect staff, felt that it "helped the programs look under the surface. It helps the grantees explore new ways of looking at things and making their programs better. It is impacting program quality and program design." Key to the success of the work spreading, according to ASAP Connect staff, is that they have been working with EXLD site-level lead staff to develop their facilitation skills. Also key to how the work unfolds into the regions is dependent, to no surprise, on the capacity of the staff leading the work. So particular regions seem to be taking the lead in their own transformations. In the next section we delve more deeply into how culture is shifting in Region Five.

Creating receptivity to statewide move toward continuous quality improvement

As the state has moved from a compliance mindset to continuous quality improvement the systems and norms of engagement have changed. By developing strong and supportive relationships between themselves and the programs, the county leads seem to have facilitated some translation of the intent and meaning behind CDE

policy changes. For example, as the CDE has moved from a compliance orientation to focusing on continuous quality improvement (CQI) they have asked programs to complete a number of tools to support this move such as a program plan and a continuous quality action plan. One staff member identified a challenge with these tools developed by a CDE partner because they were developed without adequate vetting with those on the ground doing the work. This staff member suggested that closer collaboration in the future could help create better tools that are grounded in the contexts of the work and grassroots understanding of the challenges and opportunities. Furthermore, without the guidance and support of the county leads, these kinds of "requirements" could be received as a continuation of a compliance orientation. As one county lead explains,

> We've gone narrow and deep on what that CQI process looks like. It's not just a piece of paper of an action plan. But it's really changing the culture of your team…that you go through this process, that you look into what might be those ongoing issues that we are just going around and around, and not really seeing the root cause.

This shift from compliance to CQI has created the space for the regional teams to take an asset-based approach to supporting programs and sites meet the needs of their communities. The county lead goes on to explain that to support this CQI process they have shared systems thinking tools, such as shifting the burden and the iceberg to unearth mental models and root causes that may be standing in the way of addressing challenges at their core. So in this way the statewide cultural shift is translating to regional cultural shifts. Prior to the move to CQI, correspondence with the CDE staff focused on compliance regarding student attendance and grant requirements. As a county lead recalls, before the culture was,

> run, run, run and we didn't really take the time as a team to stop and do the reflection. Whereas now, that's embedded. And so we do that, as a whole SSEL team, within our individual team and with our grantees as well.

In addition, in the past, the county leads were viewed as an arm of the CDE to pass on the state dictates. County leads would attend Regional Team Meetings, where they would be given information and expected to share it as it was shared with them. Now, county leads are empowered to build relationships with their programs and support them in a more nuanced and customized way. A county lead remembers that, when CDE operated under a system of contracts instead of grants, anytime she wanted to take any action that she, as a county lead, "had to check in with our contract monitor to make sure that's allowable activity, so that feeling at the time was unfortunately not healthy at all." In contrast, now with a system of grants, she can be much more responsive. "In Region Five, we are deeply committed to being in direct contact with our grantees, making sure that we're doing right by them based

on what they feel they need not what we say we think you need." So while making the transition to CQI requires considerable guidance from strong county leads, it is possible to slowly transition the culture to one from compliance to program improvement.

State-level transformation opens space for regional reorientation

The regional teams translated the clear message from state-level leadership of a commitment to ensuring all children have access to high-quality programs as a clarion call to build program lead and staff awareness of and organize practices around a shared vision. That vision they articulate as supporting, "students and staff, to excel and to prepare our students to be successful in college, career and life." They describe this vision-directed orientation as being focused on "their why" or as having an "enlightened self-interest."

This focus on the vision is a major strength of how Region Five operates and may account for the extent to which state-level changes have taken root at the program level. A county lead describes the shift from the previous culture of each program staff member just "doing their job" to understanding how they fit into a larger system that shares common goals for students.

> I think the biggest piece that I see the change is when staff really understand the "why." Why do we do what we do? Why did they choose this field? What are they passionate about? How will they commit to that why? So it's creating that change of culture, where it's not just reacting every day to supervising students and going down a checklist of all the things they have to do, to where they step back to think about how we build it as a team. What strengths do we have around the group? What are the areas that we might need more support?

This new frame takes an asset orientation towards staff rather than viewing them as task completers. Taking this asset orientation means understanding frontline staff's skillsets and needs for development to ensure that students are receiving a quality program. Part of ensuring this new focus on quality programs, is attending to staff needs. As one leader explained, whereas before they talked generally about the need to "support our students," now they are going deep to understand what that looks like for young inexperienced staff who are just out of high school or in college. "What does that [support] look like for them? How do we roll it out where we give them the tools and strategies that they need so they can be successful and providing support to our students?"

At a leadership level, this clear focus on the vision or the "why" means that people are driven to work together to meet shared goals and are able to engage in decision-making regardless of their status and programmatic interests. As one leader

articulated, "You are coming into the space, removing your hat, your title, your organization that you represent, and you are fully there for the why." She adds, that more and more CDE staff and County Office of Education staff are able to do this now, where fewer did in the past.

At the program level, systems thinking tools have been helpful in making visible mental models that have hindered program quality. The tools have helped staff understand the root causes of challenges which often are grounded not only in policy and practice but perhaps even more powerfully in beliefs. For example, one primary measure of program success is high attendance rates. Middle school attendance is notoriously challenging. Independent of the county lead, one program leadership team used the iceberg tool to identify what contributes to success in middle school attendance. The county lead reflects on the creativity of this team,

> I was blown away, that's a perfect example of what we want to see where people are thinking more deeply about their challenges but also thinking more deeply about the reasons why something might be working really well.…Let's use the model for identifying the good policies and practices.…That conversation was about mindset. Why do we always have the mindset that middle school students are hard to reach…there are all these excuses…for not engaging middle school students the way that we need to be engaging them and we realized that that's the mindset that we carry.

Early Evidence of Structural Changes and Improved Outcomes

The systems thinking tools learned from the coaches, the state-level shift to CQI as well as the support from experienced, strong county leads have led to several structural shifts and improved outcomes at the program and site level. In Region Five these changes have included changes in policies and practices regarding staffing, structural reorganization at the program level to ensure higher-quality programs through distribution of leadership, and greater alignment between the Expanded Learning programs and the core academic day.

Taking a systems-level approach and using the iceberg and shifting the burden tools helped district-level program directors in Region Five see how staffing shifts could contribute to program quality improvement. In two programs that we studied in Region Five, staffing was a major challenge, and collaboration with the district and program reorganization had a powerful impact on program quality. The sidebar on pages 30–31 tells the story of one program's strategy for addressing this challenge.

Distributed leadership opens doors to improved program quality

In one program, the program director distributed leadership to engage more staff in providing instructional leadership across her sites. With a Lead STEAM Site Director, a Lead Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Director, and a Program Improvement Team (PIT), these leaders conduct site visits and help implement the program's quality standards. These leaders both deliver direct instruction to students and support site directors and staff. They support site staff in understanding the program quality standards and translating them into instruction. This leadership team attends the STEAM Community of Practice meetings, facilitated by the county leads; so, in this way, the state-level changes and understandings are shared directly at the site level and influence student experience.

Supporting program improvement by aligning with the core day

The sidebar on the following two pages is one of the substantive ways that programs have begun aligning more with the core academic day. Other ways include afterschool programs being included in the district Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), the California school district accountability system; planning summer programs together; sharing staffing for summer programs; and shared staff training. As one program director put it:

> What happens during the regular school day should flow to after school and what happens after school needs to flow to the regular school day. When the bell rings, it doesn't mean poof all of a sudden they're not our students.

These examples of alignment are a new and promising shift in expanded learning time. As the program director said regarding the old climate, "Many years ago, it was very detached. And when the bell rang, it was like, 'Those are your kids.' We have a completely different take on that now." This separation was particularly true about summer programs. But, as a county lead reports, for many classroom teachers, summer programs have become a great laboratory for deepening their pedagogy, "We have almost like a waiting list of teachers that want to work in our summer program to really practice Core, because expanded learning is all about the C's. Bringing in that PBL [Project-Based Learning] and that critical thinking and collaboration and communication." With a shift in the educational paradigms in the school's core day programs, the Expanded Learning programs have become models for strong instruction.

A Staff-Centered Approach to Program Improvement

In one school district-run Expanded Learning program, the program director describes the program she joined as structured in a way that trapped it in a crisis orientation, "I felt like the department was running on just putting out fires every single day…rather than focusing on the systematic structure that needed to be fixed in order to prevent some of the events that were happening." By approaching these challenges with both attention to systemic structural inhibitors, such as low pay and consolidated leadership, as well as cultural inhibitors like lack of staff understanding and support of their mission, the director was able to substantively transform the quality of programs.

Drawing on the systems thinking tools, such as the iceberg and shifting the burden, she was able to analyze what was at the heart of the challenges. She realized two things. First, that low staff morale was having a domino effect on program quality and second, that the structure of her department centralized too much supervisory control in her position. This consolidation of control in her position, she believed, limited the opportunity for program improvement. Initially, when she began in her position, all program sites reported to her, including preschool sites, sites that served low-income students and those that served middle-income students, sites that offered drama programs, and sites that offered homeschool programs. The diversity of these sites made customized technical assistance support challenging. The program director hired a program manager and made two other positions supervisory in order to more evenly distribute technical assistance support to the sites and programs. These structural changes have freed her to develop a strong recruitment and retention plan for staff, including collaborations with local universities and colleges to create a personnel pipeline.

Furthermore, when she arrived in the position, low staff morale had a ripple effect throughout the district's programs. As she explains:

> If you are understaffed, then there's low staff morale, there is an increase of incidents occurring, and there's lower performance expectations of staff members that leads to lower quality of programs. And with that came parent complaints, injuries.

Through her investigation, the program director discovered that her district program had the lowest salaries of any after-school program in the area. She successfully negotiated a salary increase to increase staff retention and morale and to be more selective in hiring. Once hired, the department leadership focused on better supporting their staff. With the reorganized department structure, this program has been able to focus on program quality and engage site directors and frontline staff in using systems thinking tools like the iceberg

to investigate how staff can have a more engaged mindset and invested stance toward their work. She reflects, using the language of the iceberg, "The observed behavior was that staff would come into their job and leave, and there wasn't a passion or intrinsic motivation to quality standards." In response, the department leadership began working with staff at staff meetings to build relationships and identify their passions and get to know them better. According to the program director, "There was a really big push to team build and build morale." The program leadership has shared tips and articles on staff satisfaction and retention with site leaders and asked them to practice the team building and reflection activities with their staff.

The outcomes of these changes are substantive. The programs have moved from daily parent complaints and incidents to three parent complaints and two injuries in a year's time. They have moved from a 60% retention of staff to 80% from summer to fall and a 90% rate over winter break. In addition, the program director reports that staff feel supported, "We have increased our expectations of quality staff and have an onboarding process for them so that they're not just thrown into programs.…We are focusing on the quality of programming."

One of the direct outcomes of this distribution of leadership is on policies and practices regarding student retention and support. In the past, if a student had three behavioral infraction write-ups, they were expelled from the program. Now, if a student is struggling, the site leads complete a referral form, that student meets with the Program PBIS Lead and, if necessary, the meeting includes the parents. In addition, the site leaders are now required to meet monthly with the school principal and, as part of that meeting, discuss students who have behavioral challenges. Furthermore, site leaders now participate in students' SST meetings, so a unified approach can be taken to address students' needs. As one Expanded Learning leader explained:

> I just attended an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a student who is struggling during the day and struggling after school. But [I'm] seeing what we can do after school to support the student in the same way they're being supported during the regular school day, and a big part of that is connecting with special education.

Since these policy changes have been enacted—resulting from a deep, trusting relationship between the program director and the district leadership—special education supports now follow students from the core day to after school. So if a student has a one-on-one aide during the core day, that aid comes with them to after school and the special education department pays that cost. Since these policy changes have been enacted, no students have been kicked out of the programs.

Although school districts and programs have long expressed a desire to support each other, the county leads report that these expressions were rarely grounded in policies and practices and shared services and resources:

> With our staff better informed and better equipped with resources, there's been more of that common language with regular core day. And now we're seeing what real support looks like where the Superintendent is on board, included in LCAP. [District administrators] are coming to our events; they are supporting summer programs.

Policies and practices have been implemented to support this cultural shift of shared responsibility. For example, in one district-run program, the Expanded Learning site directors were invited, for the first time, to a district-run mental health training for core day staff. Other trainings for Expanded Learning staff have focused on how to support special needs students with IEP's or 504 plans and how to engage families as well.

The shift to alignment with core day has also meant sharing of resources and information on supporting students, such as the funding of special education aides in the Expanded Learning programs and inviting Expanded Learning staff to IEP meetings.

One of the unforeseen challenges of increased program quality, alignment to the core day, and strong relationships with district leaders is the loss of staffing in the Expanded Learning programs to core day programs. As one county lead described the staffing challenges:

> We come to a point where we feel like, "Yes. They are well trained. They understand. They're onboard. They're doing great work." And then we might have them for a year or two. And then they go off, which, in many cases, we've nurtured. And we've taught them the right way to continue in the field of education…and they're going onto the school core day. But it almost feels like a revolving door.

One district had developed a teacher residency program and, while this has been a great way to build a pipeline for qualified teachers who know the community well, it has resulted in turnover in the Expanded Learning program as four site directors left in the same year to participate in the program. These outcomes, while challenging, are actually signs of success of the quality of leadership development in the Expanded Learning programs. It could be interesting to think about how the Expanded Learning teaching staff now teaching in the school could be built upon to increase collaboration and coordination between the core day and after-school realms.

Lessons learned at the regional level

What we have learned from some exploration of one region is that change at the state level doesn't cause change at the regional level. However, for those at the intersection of the state and regional level—such as the county leads—feeling valued and celebrated, being treated as professionals who can benefit from in-depth training, and being able to engage in deep conversations with colleagues about their relative roles in the system has empowered them to engage with their regions in ways that are both informed by the state vision and policies and tailored to the needs of the programs in their regional context. The focus on CQI has also freed these staff to move from program monitors to program supporters. Finally, the personal mastery and systems thinking tools and practices have equipped them to better support their programs and sites.

We have also learned that deep collaboration with partners matters. In the case of district run programs, strong buy-in and collaborative relationships with the Superintendent and district leadership can make a substantive difference in the quality of programs offered to students. In one of the district programs, not only a strong and trusting relationship between the program and the District leadership but also a strong relationship between the district leadership and the school board resulted in improved program quality. For example, requests from the program leadership to the Superintendent for increased funding for staffing to oversee both the after-school and pre-school programs were passed on to the school board who approved the requests.

Deep relationships between, not just the Superintendent and the programs, but also with the Human Resources department and the Business Manager can make a substantive difference. In one district-run program, cultivating the HR department's understanding of the necessity of quick turn-around on hiring paperwork has made a difference in being able to secure staff. As a program director explains:

> When we do interviews, [we] need to hire as fast as you can. Because, if we get somebody that wants the job, they're going to take something else very quickly if we don't offer it right away. So HR is in the loop with helping us as well.

Conclusion

By taking a humanistic approach to the transformation process, the EXLD made great progress scaling up the influence of the coaching beyond the core team who attended Aptos. Through inclusive processes to expand the team and an initial and continued focus on the individual as a whole human being, the majority of staff eagerly embraced the personal mastery practices and orientation. From there, the seeds were planted for deeper, cultural transformation and changed practices that strengthened relationships and built a sense of shared vision and mutual responsibility to support grantees to deliver high-quality programs for children. The cultural transformation and practices of inclusivity, celebration of the individual, and more complex systems thinking tools then could expand beyond the System of Support across the division to other partners and be introduced to the grantees.

This success was supported by the presence of a clear, consistent, and compelling goal: more children experiencing high-quality after-school programs. It unerringly and inviolably held and followed a theory of change that recognized that educational organizational improvement is a human endeavor and so focused efforts on the growth and development of the adults responsible for the growth and development of children. Because human growth and development take time and support, the activities and processes enacted with the theory of change provided sufficient time and support for the human participants to grow and develop. Several factors stand out in the work's use of the time and support provided.

While the changes that happened likely would not have occurred without the strong leadership of Michael Funk, the reasons for the change are greater than that of a charismatic leader. Rather, they are indicative of his leadership approach, which was to model a caring, compassionate, and humanistic philosophy that begins with the respectful growth and development of each individual as a human being. An external partner commended him on his willingness to show his own vulnerability, "Michael was willing to take a risk. He demonstrated open-mindedness, vulnerability, and transparency."

Michael also believed that he needed to take a strong initial stance and then could gradually release control. Inspired by a description from SOL coach Mette, who is trained as a biologist, he explains:

> When there is imminent danger, the alpha wolf gets out in front. When the danger is dissipated, the alpha goes to the back. In the early intense days, I had to get out in front, and now it has been a process of gradually moving back and letting other people step up.

An outside partner describes the shift in his role from managing everything to building a team as being influenced by his attendance at the Aptos Leadership Institute. "The giant in him was awoken, and he knew what he had to do."

Another key component of the successful use of time and support by this project was the quality of the coaching from the SOL team as well as from the Sponsorship Group—particularly, the support from ASAP Connect, who lead the planning for the tri-annual stakeholder meetings. At each meeting, the systems thinking and organizational tools and practices were introduced and then participants had opportunities to practice using them, both personally and grounded in their actual work. As the project evolved, they had more and more opportunities to practice with the tools in an applied fashion around the most pressing workplace issues, such as providing technical assistance to grantees deemed in the highest need.

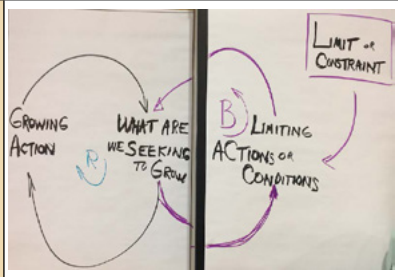
The EXLD has travelled a considerable distance and continues to grow and develop its people, organizations, and work. The translation of the state-level transformation in Region Five shows promising evidence of cultural and structural change resulting in improved program quality and student experiences. It is important to note, however, that Region Five is widely recognized as a leader in regional change. Further investment in the development of regional and program leads across the state will be necessary to ensure that the early successes in Region Five are shared across California.

In addition, while it is valuable to invest energy into developing everyone's personal mastery and ability to understand and use systems thinking/organizational learning approaches and methods, that is not the end in itself. The end goal is improved opportunities for children. There is a danger that, without drawing a clear link between the division's investment in staff and increased opportunities for children, the efforts will be viewed as "fluff" or non-essential. It will be helpful to create opportunities for staff across the state to learn from the early successes and expertise of staff at the regional, program, and site level. For instance, the tri-annual SSEL meetings could provide a space for this type of cross-fertilization to take root. In this way, the work can continue to evolve and follow its theory of action that uses a humanistic approach to scale up the transformation of a large state bureaucracy with the ultimate goal of high-quality programs that benefit each and every child.

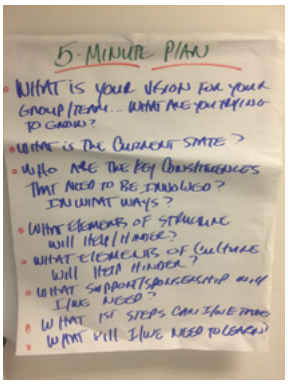
Appendix A—Systems Thinking/Organizational Learning Key Terms[4]

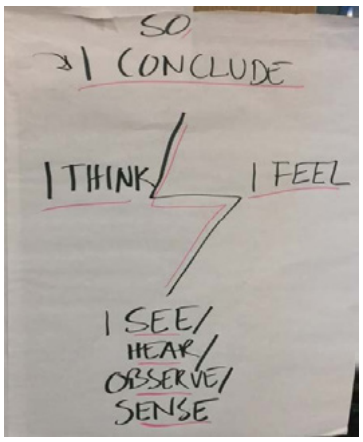
Society of Organizational Learning and California Department of Education Expanded Learning Division Tools and Methods

Below are photos of flip charts presented by the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL) facilitators beginning in October 2017 and continuing through January 2018. Each tool/method includes a brief overview and possible uses for SSEL members to begin trying on these tools and methods. As you read through the overview and possible uses, we recommend you also refer to your own journal notes related to these topics. Adoption and integration of these tools and methods have the potential to create good conditions for enabling learning communities to collaborate, build, form and stay connected with one another.

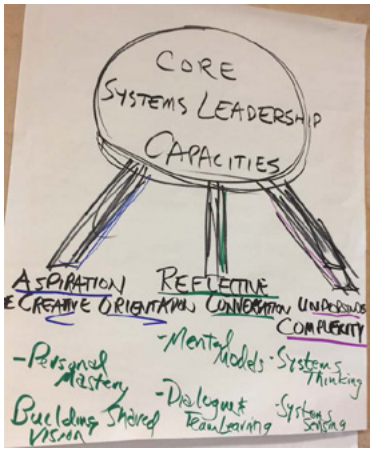
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Barriers to Growth		**Overview:** There are many growth challenges in new initiatives. Some growth challenges are encountered in the early stages of the initiative (i.e. people questioning the credibility of change leaders, lack of resources, questioning "Is this really my job?", etc.) Other occur in the middle stages of an initiative (i.e. fear about doing things differently or workload, anxiety about real/authentic conversations, some feel a threat of success, believers vs. non-believers, etc.) **Possible Uses:** Consider a growth initiative you/your team are involved in. Reach out to individuals whom you feel may be threatened and engage them. Ask yourself these questions: • What is one challenge or barrier to growing this initiative? • How does the challenge manifest? (Tangible & intangible ways) • Where is it coming from? • What are a few strategies for dealing with it? Take small steps!

4. Appendix A is taken from the California Department of Education's System of Support for Expanded Learning Triannual In-Person Meeting Participant Handbook, June 12–14, 2018.

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Building a Shared Vision: Five Minute Plan		**Overview:** As we get really clear about something that really matters to us, we can orient our passions and our deepest curiosities, our real aspirations. When this happens, a lot can change that can be a sustainable source of change. This can influence the whole shift from desperation to aspiration, and from problem-solving to creating. **Possible Uses:** With your team, use the questions in the 5 Minute Plan chart to reflect and discuss your vision for your group or team and what you're trying to grow.
Check-in		**Overview:** The SoL team incorporated check-ins into the start of each meeting. Besides giving individuals a voice, this practice can help individuals tap into their aspirations and creative orientation, and also begin to develop shared vision and understanding. • Step 1: Facilitators opened up the day asking the entire group to take approx 5 min to individually and quietly reflect on a guiding question and then journal. • Step 2: Everyone moved into groups of 3–5 with chairs facing each other, and took approx 1–2 min per person to share out something they were reflecting on. The others were asked to give the person speaking their full attention and not say anything, just actively listen and absorb. Every person was given an opportunity to share with the small group. **Possible Uses:** Consider incorporating into your team meetings or larger group meetings. If part of a triad, consider rotating who shares the guiding question each time.

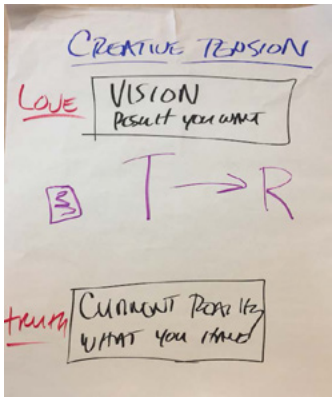
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Clean Advocacy		**Overview:** Clean Advocacy is the process of using "I messages" to help you have a discussion with another person to move from difference to dialogue. Being aware of and owning our emotions can free us up. It's a high form of emotional intelligence. Consider how being direct and authentic can help you feel less agonized over things you're assuming and help you use inquiry to check your assumptions. Here is the process: • First state what you're observing, seeing, hearing, sensing or noticing (e.g. "I noticed that you seemed upset yesterday when we discussed roles and responsibilities. You had several objections to what was said, or possibly the way they were said, and you seemed to be frowning and had your head down and was quiet the rest of the meeting." • State what you're feeling (e.g. "I've been feeling concerned and a little anxious since that time.") • State what you're thinking (e.g. "I wonder if you feel I've been unfair in assigning roles/responsibilities.") • State what conclusions you've drawn (e.g. "If I'm right in assuming you feel I've been unfair in assigning roles and responsibilities, I hope you'll tell me. And I hope we can have a deeper discussion about roles/responsibilities to ensure I understand any concerns you may have. I want to ensure we have everyone's voice represented and are as fair as possible to everyone." **Possible Uses:** Consider practicing using the Clean Advocacy process when you're aware you may be making assumptions and "climbing the ladder" (Ladder of Inference) and you want to use inquiry to check your assumptions (Moving from Differences to Dialogue).

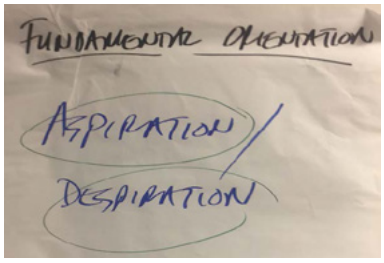
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses

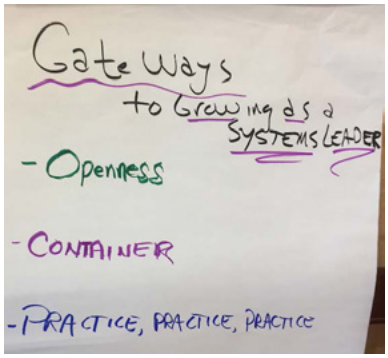
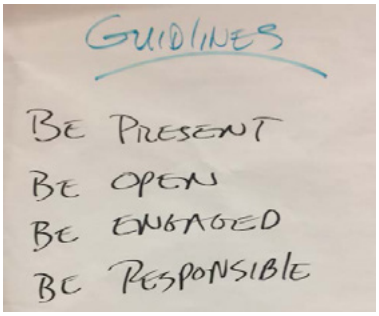
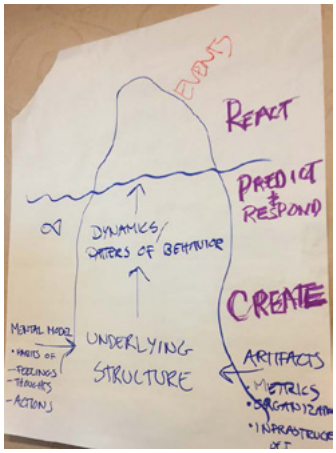
Core Competencies of Organizational Learning		**Overview:** What are you really passionate about? Organizational learning gives you the tools to answer these questions through personal and organizational transformation. When you're able to see the structures that impact the way people think and see, you uncover their passions and discover what drives them. Sometimes also referred to as the "three legged chair," this model represents several disciplines that represent a lifelong body of study and practice for individuals and teams.
		
		• Aspiration & Creative Orientation - Aspiration taps into people's passion and doing something that really matters. The journey to building a shared vision takes time, and can be strengthened when individuals get clearer about their own personal visions. Creative Orientation helps us evolve from always reacting, which is profoundly limiting on its own, to also building in practices of reflection to develop a vision of what we want to create. In aspiration and creative orientation we see elements of:
		  ○ Personal Mastery—having a deep sense of purpose, ability to see and tell the truth, ability to be self-aware in the moment, expression of natural curiosity, courage, ability to choose, and commitment to lifelong learning
		  ○ Building a Shared Vision—People develop shared images of the future they seek to create and the principles and guiding practices by which they hope to get there.
		  ○ Includes models like visualization (Personal Visioning & Evocation Exercise), centering and Creative Tension.
		
		• Reflective Conversation Involves turning to one another and having real conversations; how the "we" comes into being. This is the domain of mental models which are assumptions that all humans have, often accompanied with emotion. When we treat our own mental models of another person as "fact," we can inadvertently create disrespect. When we're able to become more aware of our mental models, we can create a reality of respect and health in our relationships.
		  ○ Mental Models (Iceberg)
		  ○ Clean Advocacy
		  ○ Dialogue and team learning
		  ○ Left-Hand Column Exercise (exploring and testing assumptions)
		  ○ Ladder of Inference

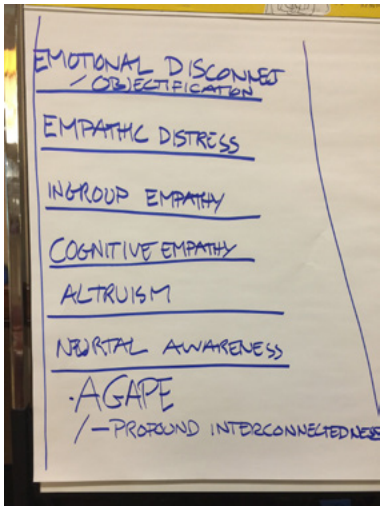
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses

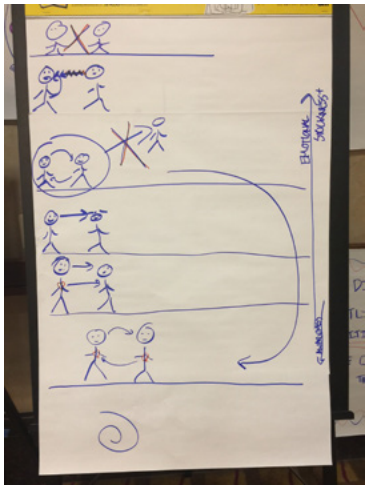
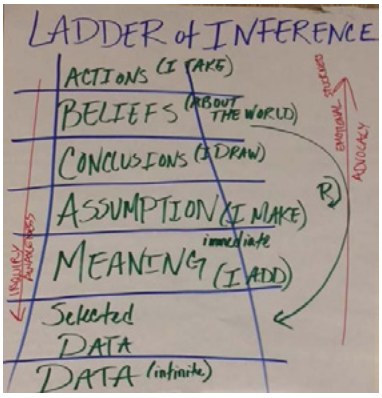
		• Understanding Complexity – Means interdependent. When I really understand how my internal thoughts reflect and create my feelings and actions, I can create interconnectedness
		  ○ Systems thinking (Theory of Process)
		  ○ Systems sensing
		  ○ Includes models such as Iceberg, Reinforcing and Balancing Loops and Shifting the Burden
		
		Possible Uses: The Core Competencies for Organizational Learning provides a macro view packed with all kinds of ideas, tools, and methods. As you or your team "try on" some of these ideas or the tools/methods, consider revisiting this diagram and components to ground yourself in what the competencies are, their related elements, and how all these pieces are integrated.

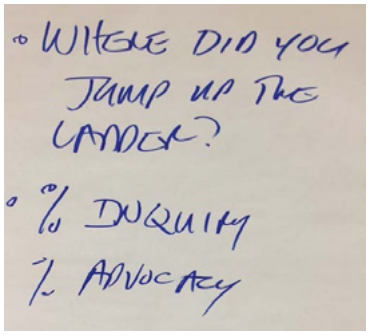
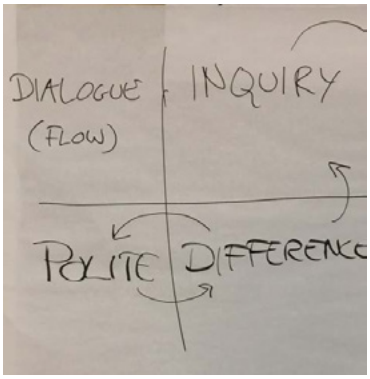
Creative Tension		**Overview:** A central practice of personal mastery involves learning to keep both (a) your personal vision and (b) a clear picture of the current reality. Doing this will generate a force within yourself called "creative tension." Tension, by its nature, seeks resolution. Personal mastery teaches us to not lower our vision, even if it seems like our vision is impossible. It also teaches us that the vision isn't important in itself; it's what the vision does that's important. Personal mastery teaches us to not shrink back from seeing the world as it is, even it makes us uncomfortable. It requires us to ask ourselves, even in times of stress, "What is going on right now?" and "Why is my reality so difficult right now?" It's important to be aware of what motivates our actions. Practicing personal mastery teaches us to be courageous in making difficult choices because they really matter. We get better at this over time, by practicing. **Possible Uses:** Encourage others on your teams or work groups to discuss and reflect on these ideas.

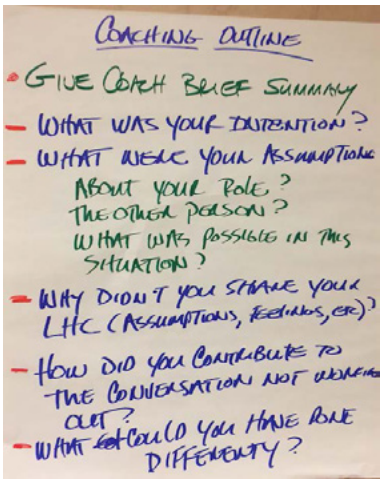
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Field for Systemic Change		**Overview:** This diagram depicts a mandala, a circle with a center, with four components all equally important to creating systemic change. The goal is to create a vision of what we want to grow, and develop as a community of learners who reflect on how and what we're learning. • Capacity Building—What are we trying to grow? How might that growth process become self-reinforcing? • Practice—What are we trying to accomplish? • Community Building—Who is the "we?" Who is not here? Community building is about building the net that will catch people before they fall. • Research—What are we trying to learn? We need to embed some sort of reflective process to grow and improve. We can be the researchers, noticing how and where the social field is changing, evolving and growing because of all our efforts. **Possible Uses:** If your team is focused on developing and growing a particular vision or project, reflect on the four components of the Field of Systemic Change model and related questions.
Fundamental Orientation: Aspiration vs. Desperation		**Overview:** The journey toward building a shared vision takes time, and it evolves more readily when people get clearer in their own minds about their own personal visions and passions. • Aspiration—tapping into people's passion; their willingness to try something that they really want. Ask yourself, "What really matters to me?" and "What would I be willing to stand for?" It's more sustainable and focused on creating and building, not avoiding or making something stop or go away. It should originate in a place of goodness, not fear or anxiety. • Desperation—driven by crisis; short-term motivations; feel threatened; feel like you're at the end of your rope. Feel that if you act, you need to react again. Desperation is related to extrinsic motivation. **Possible Uses:** Encourage others on your teams or work groups to discuss and reflect on these ideas.

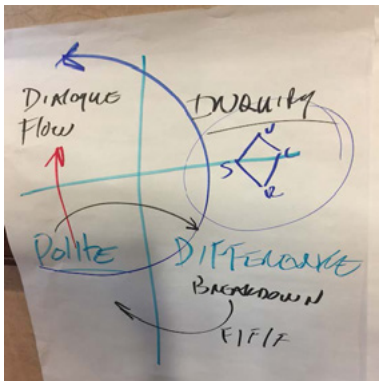
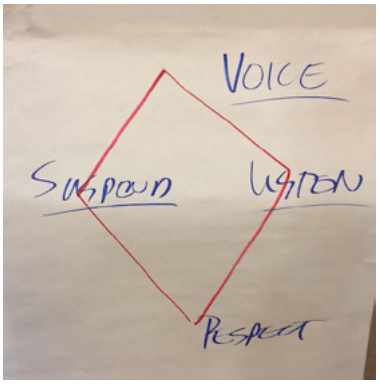
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Gateways to Growing as a Systems Leader		**Overview:** Any individual who wants to grow his/her capabilities as systems leader can begin by integrating three basic practices: 1. Openness—create your own sense of openness and self-awareness. 2. Container—create safe spaces or "containers" where people are given opportunities to reflect and talk about deep issues, and where the social field is generative. 3. Practice, practice, practice **Possible Uses:** Self-reflection for any who would like to grow as systems leaders.
Group Guidelines		**Overview:** Helps set behavior guidelines of a group or meeting; sometimes called group norms or expectations. Helpful to calibrate behavior for all kinds of groups and teams. **Possible Uses:** Team meetings for teams that regularly meet; other group meetings where attendees will be together for a long day or multiple sessions. Facilitator may choose to pre-establish the guidelines or norms and elicit specific feedback of what people feel each of those broad general expectations could look and sound like. May also choose to elicit feedback from the group on what guidelines or norms they'd like, or may be missing. To see how you're doing, may choose to check-in throughout the meeting.
Iceberg: A Metaphor to Consider the Health of a System		**Overview:** A system is perfectly designed to influence all the actions and behaviors that occur within it, good or bad. We use iceberg metaphor to explain how a system can be composed of the social field and artifacts which when working together influence patterns of behavior. Often, we only see and hear the "events" at the top of the iceberg, however, the root causes for those observable behaviors are hidden "beneath the water." More than external factors, systems normally cause their own problems. • Events—These lie at the top of the iceberg above the water line. When we respond only to the events, we are usually reacting and not addressing the deeper reasons for behaviors being exhibited. Events can be observable behaviors like people's words, tone of voice, an email you read, body language, gestures, etc. • Patterns of Behavior/ Dynamics—beliefs, values, feelings, biases and fears, climate. • Underlying Structures—the real heart of what is going on. Composed of mental models and artifacts.

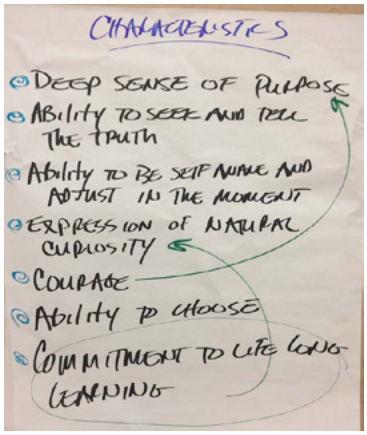
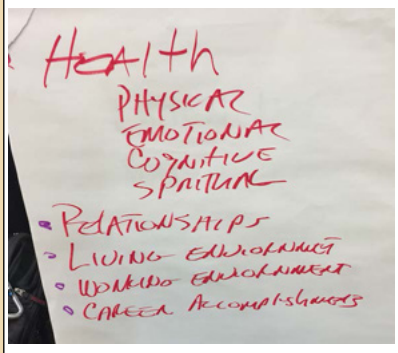
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
		○ Mental Models—our habits of thoughts, feelings and actions. ○ Artifacts—who was invited to the meeting, meeting room set-up, who talked first, organizational charts, roles and responsibilities, contracts, grants, metrics, policies. **Possible Uses:** Reflect individually and as a team on where we might be making assumptions based on events and or patterns of behavior/events. Recognize where we might need to go deeper by reflecting on the underlying structures. The primary thing we can do is bring these things into awareness.
Ladder of Connectedness		**Overview:** As humans, we feel most connected with others when there is a deep emotional connectedness. The more we can create opportunities to deepen our connectedness with others, the more satisfying our relationships can be. The "Ladder of Connectedness" is a model that shows the varying stages of connectedness that we experience on a regular basis with others. The objective is not to be, or expect someone else to be, at any particular place on this ladder, but to be self-aware where you might be showing up in a particular circumstance. • Emotional Disconnect / Objectification—in this state, we feel extremely disconnected with others. We actually disassociate ourselves from others and objectify others. It's in this state where most violence that humans do to one another exists (e.g. calling someone else an enemy). • Empathic Distress—in this state, we feel distressed by the distress of another. It's wanting to stop another person from expressing emotion because it hurts to feel your own emotions. An example might be hearing a child cry and wanting that child to stop crying so you no longer feel the pain of the cry. Empathic distress may sound like, "You're making me feel...." Empathic distress may appear to be Altruism, but it's very different. • Ingroup Empathy—in this state, we tend to exclude people who aren't like us. It's an Us vs. Them tendency. It's about not seeing how we're similar, but choosing to see how we're different and avoiding feeling close to those whom we feel are other. Tribal feelings, family, disallowing others to enter "our country". • Cognitive Empathy—in this state, we avoid allowing ourselves to become overwhelmed emotionally. We may hear and see the other person's emotion, but we don't take on their emotions. It's my capacity to put myself in your shoes.

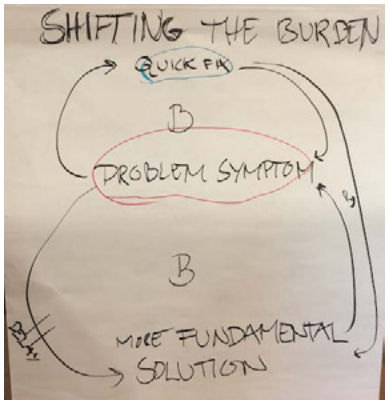
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
		○ Altruism—in this state, we selflessly want to relieve the suffering of another. We love with our hearts and minds and wish the best for another. We have a compassionate state of mind and show up with love and care for someone else. Altruism is widespread in nature and instinctual not to want others harmed, even if not their own species. ○ Neutral Awareness—some call this state the definition of love. In this state, we feel we can completely relax and be with another. We feel that our heart and mind is totally at ease with another. We're not trying to impose or change someone. We just love them for who they are. According to Chilean biologist Humberto Manturana, this state is "the act of allowing the other to be a legitimate other." ○ Agape—some call this state universal love. In this state, we recognize the profound interconnectedness of all humans. This is comparable to the love a parent has for his/her child. This is a love that doesn't need to be earned. It's brotherly love and limitless. **Possible Uses:** Reflect how you might generate ways to form deep connections with others (i.e. empathy exercises, intuition exercises, meditation practices, yoga/chi-gong practices, etc.)
Ladder of Inference		**Overview:** We live in a world of self-generating beliefs which remain largely untested. We adopt these beliefs because they're based on conclusions, which are inferred from what we observe, plus our past experience. Our ability to achieve the results we truly desire is eroded by our feelings that (a) our beliefs are *the* truth, (b) the truth is obvious, (c) our beliefs are based on real data, and (d) the data we select are the real data. This metaphor of climbing up a ladder in our minds, can help us recognize how rapidly we leap to knee-jerk conclusions with no intermediate thought process. **Possible Uses:** Reflect on when and where you "jumped" or "climbed" the ladder. When we climb up the ladder, we tend to become a fierce advocate and have a tendency toward greater emotional "stuckness." When we bring ourselves down the ladder, there is usually a stronger sense of emotional awareness and utilizing inquiry. Emotional intensity is not necessarily a bad thing, but it can become a problem if you become stuck there.

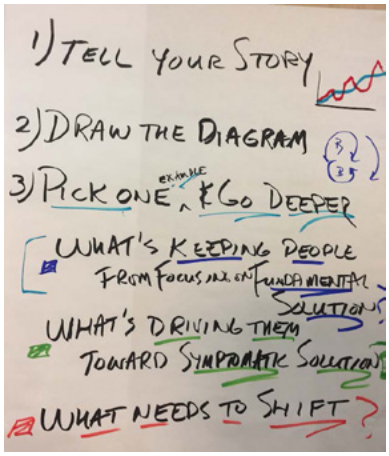
Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
	 	Challenge your assumptions and beliefs with a good balance of inquiry vs. advocacy, and find whether the "truth" you thought was real, really was. Consider the following: • How you can become more aware of your own thinking and reasoning (reflection)? Recognize that you might you "climb the ladder" often, and if so, how can you reduce the amount of time you spend up the ladder. • How you can make your thinking and reasoning more visible to others (advocacy)? • How to help others recognize where they might be climbing the ladder? Best by inquiring into others' thinking and reasoning (inquiry). Another practice we might employ is suspending our beliefs, a sort of wait and see.

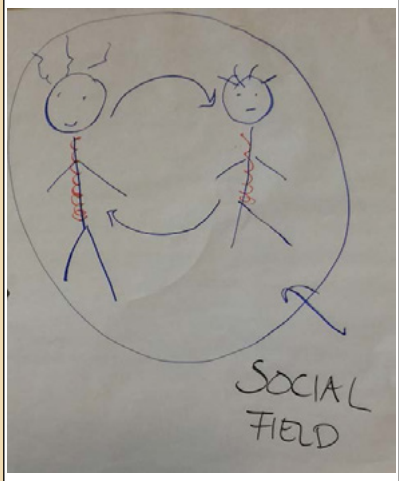
Left-Hand Column Exercise		**Overview:** The Left-Hand Column exercise is a way to become aware of the assumptions which govern our conversations and contribute to blocking our purpose in real-life situations. It's a way of talking about your assumptions more effectively.
		• Step 1: Choose a problem
		Choose a tough, interpersonal difficulty that many of us try to ignore. Write a brief paragraph describing the situation including what you're trying to accomplish and what is blocking you.
		• Step 2: Fill in the Right-Hand Column (What Was Said)
		On a piece of paper, draw a line down the center. Write "What Was Said" on the top right and "What I Was Thinking" on the top left. Recall the frustrating conversation you had with the other person, and write that dialogue in the right-hand column.
		• Step 3: Fill in the Left-Hand Column (What I Was Thinking)
		Now in the left column, write what you were thinking and feeling, but not saying.
		• Step 4: Reflection Using the Left-Hand Column as your Resource
		Use the left-hand column as a way to examine your own thinking. Ask yourself:
		  ○ What has really led me to think and feel this way?
		  ○ What was my intention? What was I trying to accomplish?

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
		○ Did I achieve the results I intended? ○ How might my comments have contributed to the difficulties? ○ Why didn't I say what was in the left-hand column? ○ What assumptions was I making about the other person or people? ○ What were the costs of operating this way? Payoffs? ○ What prevented me from acting differently? ○ How can I use my left-hand column as a resource to improve my communication? **Possible Uses:** Consider using the Left-Hand Column Exercise when you have a particularly challenging situation with another individual or group. Reflect individually or with a coaching partner on how you could have addressed the situation more effectively.
Moving from Differences to Dialogue	 	**Overview:** Oftentimes we are hampered in obtaining good dialogue with others because we fall into a dysfunctional cycle of experiencing differences in which we either fight, flee or freeze. When the conversation breaks down, and doesn't progress to true healthy dialogue, we often loop back to being polite. This loop of being polite after a breakdown in differences can be a frustrating never-ending loop. Rather, we can integrate elements of inquiry in which we invite others to understand new dimensions in what we're thinking and saying. The flow of good dialogue is increased when we're able to integrate the following: • Suspend our assumptions, refraining from imposing our views on others and avoiding holding back what we think • Respect every person in the conversation • Deeply listen to one another • Give one another voice One way of practicing moving from differences to dialogue is to employ Clean Advocacy. **Possible Uses:** Self reflection individually. Team reflection on how we're planning on integrating inquiry and clean advocacy. Post reflection on specific examples of how we've recently been successful in integrating these methods to increase dialogue, and how/why it's helped.

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Personal Mastery		**Overview:** Personal mastery is learning to expand our personal capacity to create the results we most desire, and creating an organizational environment which encourages all its members to develop themselves towards the goals and purposes they choose. It helps people develop a coherent picture of desired results by balancing the tension between their vision and their reality. Some characteristics of personal mastery are listed on the flipchart to the left. Robert mentioned that he feels curiosity is the "true" Fountain of Youth. It doesn't really matter what you're learning, but that you're committed to being a learner. In personal mastery, we're more effective when we focus on the result we want to see, not what gets in the way. **Possible Uses:** Encourage others on your teams or work groups to discuss and reflect on these ideas.
Personal Visioning: "What Do I Really Care About?"		**Overview:** As we get really clear about something that really matters to us, we can orient our passions and our deepest curiosities, our real aspirations. When this happens, a lot can change that can be a sustainable source of change. This can influence the whole shift from desperation to aspiration, and from problem-solving to creating. This guided imagery exercise can help individuals reflect on their own lives and create a sort of life "wish list." **Method:** Visualization, or guided imagery, is a method that can be used to create shared vision and personal mastery. This simple, powerful technique that can have many health-related physical and emotional benefits. It often helps people feel less nervous or upset, be less bothered by pain, or achieve goals. Through visualization, individuals can learn to use their imagination to "Create the State They Want," meaning that they can actually change how they're feeling and what they're focused on. **Possible Uses:** Consider leading participants through a guided imagery exercise where you allow them to reflect on a wish list of what they'd like to see in their lives. Choose topics that likely have strong, personal meaning for them. Topics might be their health (physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual), relationships, living environments, working environments, career accomplishments, etc.

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Prisoner, Vacationer, Sophisticate, Explorer		**Overview:** When individuals enter a meeting or learning environment, they can recognize that the power is entirely in individuals' hands to choose how they'd like to participate. • Prisoners—Feel that they've been forced to attend and would rather be doing something else. • Vacationers—Aren't interested in the work of the retrospective, but are glad to be away from the daily grind. • Sophisticate—Know that they know everything that will be, or is being, presented. They feel they have nothing to gain. • Explorers—Are eager to discover new ideas and insights. They want to learn everything they can about the iteration/release/project. Will look over all the available information, and are pleased to go home with even a few useful new ideas. **Possible Uses:** Have individuals reflect on how they're currently showing up to the meeting and their level of engagement. Consider how they may have shown up to previous meetings. Likely a personal, private reflection. Options: Individual journaling/reflection, small group discussion, large group share out.
Shifting the Burden		**Overview:** The Shifting the Burden model usually begins with a problem symptom that prompts someone to intervene and "solve" it. The solution, or solutions, are obvious and immediate; they relieve the problem symptom quickly. But they divert attention away from the real or fundamental source of the problem which becomes weaker as less attention is paid to it. This reinforces the perception that there is no other way out except the symptomatic solution. In shifting the burden, we're working toward addressing fundamental solutions. Things that cause us to neglect or avoid fundamental solutions and instead employ quick fixes might include: • Time • Effort • Commitment • Discipline • Sometimes we're not rewarded for addressing a fundamental solution but instead rewarded for the quick fix • We're often attracted to the path of least resistance • Sometimes we're trapped inside structures (i.e. institutions, systems)

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
		Questions we can ask to address the most fundamental solution include: • What's keeping people from focusing on the most fundamental solution? • What's driving people toward a symptomatic solution? • What needs to shift? An example: Your problem symptom might be "I'm broke." One symptomatic solution or quick fix might be, "I'll go to the bank and get a loan." This may help your problem in the short term, but in the long term might make your problem even bigger as you incur more debt. **Possible Uses:** • On 10/5/17, SSEL members broke into small groups to work with the Shifting the Burden model. Each team addressed one unique problem and explored what the quick fixes have been and what the more fundamental solutions might be. The SoL team recommended that some teams consider continuing working on these real-world problems using this model. • On 1/10/18, SSEL members worked in regional triad teams, or in division teams, and used Shifting the Burden to address the challenge of addressing the complexities of statewide convenings to develop a more cohesive strategy.

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Social Field		**Overview:** The social field is the structure of the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations and systems that give rise to collective behaviors and outcomes. When people experience a transformational social shift, they notice a change in the atmosphere. All human beings participate in co·creating the complex social networks they live in and engage with. Many of us, however, are unaware of how we are shaping the social field; how we're "showing up" to a space or group, and the positive/negative effect of how we show up has on those around us. We have the ability to co-create a generative social field in which we facilitate deep conversations about big issues, and shape a safe and supportive climate where individuals in our teams/systems can feel emotionally safe and respected. There is power in creating something good. Koinonia is translated from a Greek word meaning communion, joint participation, or fellowship. It's something that we share with others, a contribution, a jointly contributed gift. **Possible Uses:** Encourage others on your teams or work groups to discuss and reflect on these ideas. Discuss the power we have to co-create a Safe and Supportive Environment for adults and students by being more cognizant of how as individuals we show up. Reflect on how this relates to our own personal mastery.
Systems Learning & Building: Theory of Process		**Overview:** When building a new system, integrating something new or different into our existing structure, we can refer to the Theory of Process spiral to reassure ourselves that the building process is a continuum and includes multiple stages before we're at an advanced phase of implementation. **Possible Uses:** As you embark on a new project or initiative with your team, periodically reflect as a team on the Theory of Process spiral to remember the complexities of systems building. Consider how and when your team will develop a new phase of the spiral, reassuring yourself that you may need to move into different aspects of the continuum concurrently at times (e.g. you may be moving into the "Embracing Complexity" phase; however, as new members join your team you might need to create structures for on boarding those new members to the "Discovery" phase). Use this tool as a way for ongoing reflection, iteration and improvements as you continue to build and enhance your system.

Tools / Methods	Flip Chart	Overview & Possible Uses
Team Dynamics **Kantor's Four Player Model + Strengths**		**Overview:** The best teams are those in which people can play multiple roles. For example a leader who can't follow will never create other leaders. It's important to have all parts, but people should move into different roles. This fluidity is important. David Kantor's Theory of Structural Dynamics, also known as the Four Player Model, is a theory of how face-to-face communication works, and doesn't work, With humans. This model holds that between people, there are four possible speech acts: • Mover (gives voice, direction) • Follower (listens, completes) • Oppose (provides respectful correction; offers ideas of how to enhance a move) • Bystander (provides perspective) Many problems occur when people become "stuck" and over-use one of the four actions again and again. For example, if you come up against a "stuck opposer," a great leader will receive that stuck opposer gracefully. **Possible Uses:** Consider how you engage and leverage your Top 5 Strengths. Using the Kantor/Strengths Worksheet, write examples of how your strengths may show up when you're communicating most optimally (light), and when you're communicating in a less-than-optimal manner (shadow). Discuss your findings with your team members, sharing both the positive and less-than-positive to increase understanding and communication.
Visualization Using Evocation Exercise: "Experience Being on a Strong Team"		**Overview:** Evocation is the act of recalling a feeling, memory or image to the conscious mind. In this Evocation Exercise, one person will take his/her time in recalling a specific experience of a team that has worked extremely well together. In doing this, all three participants can begin to hear and begin to recognize elements of a strong team described by the Interviewee. **Possible Uses:** When you want to help one of your teams, or a team you support, visualize the potential of what they could really become, help them become grounded in their own current or past experiences of being part of a really great team. If you'd like to be an active participant in this process, consider asking ASAP Connect to facilitate this process for you and your team.

Appendix B—Timeline of Key Events (Spring 2017–Fall 2018)

May 2017	11 members of the EXLD attend four-day Aptos Institute
June 2017	Three-day SSEL meeting early introduction of some personal mastery and systems thinking practices
June 2017	Aptos Group two-day meeting with SOL coaches and start of 18 months of coaching
Summer 2017	Aptos Group virtual meeting with coaches to plan expansion of group to 18-person Sponsorship Group
September 2017	Newly formed Sponsorship Group two-day meeting with coaches and contribution to plan of SSEL Meeting
October 2017	SSEL Meeting, some Sponsorship Group members play minor facilitation roles
November 2017	Impromptu creation of optional monthly check-in calls for any interested SSEL participants led by non-Sponsorship Group members
December 2017	Multiple phone planning meetings between Sponsorship Group and coaches
January 2018	Three-day SSEL Meeting (coach Robert Hanig absent due to illness); Sponsorship Group takes on more facilitation; Examples of use of personal mastery and systems/ thinking practices documented in meeting program
May 2018	Two-day planning meeting with Sponsorship Group and coaches
May 2018	Statewide BOOST Conference, members of Sponsorship Group present their work
June 2018	Three-day SSEL Meeting, Sponsorship Group takes on more facilitation
September 2018	Two-day planning meeting with coaches, release of all facilitation of SSEL meeting to Sponsorship Group
October 2018	Three-day SSEL Meeting, facilitated entirely by Sponsorship Group

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